

# Committee on Resources

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## **Statement of Rep. Shelley Moore Capito Before the The House National Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands Subcommittee June 15, 2004**

Good morning and thank you Chairman Radanovich, Ranking Member Christensen, and other National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands Committee Members for giving me this opportunity to testify before your committee. My name is Shelley Moore Capito, and I represent West Virginia's Second Congressional District, which stretches from the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, west across the state of West Virginia to the Ohio River.

I am grateful to the subcommittee for this hearing today concerning the proposed expansion of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The expansion represents a reasonable and necessary investment in the future of this national treasure, and the future of West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. I am also pleased to join my colleague Senator Byrd in championing this proposal.

Last summer, I met with a diverse group of my constituents to walk the Murphy Farm, an area rich in Civil War and Civil Rights history as well as breathtaking beauty. We celebrated the farm's recent acquisition by the National Park Service, an acquisition made possible by a federal appropriation secured by Senator Byrd during the 106th Congress. With this legislation, the local community, the National Park Service, and various nonprofit organizations can all work together in partnership to preserve America's historic heritage.

Harpers Ferry provides a living classroom for learning about key events in the nation's history related to westward expansion, industry, transportation, the Civil War, and Civil Rights in a scenic setting that Thomas Jefferson once called "worth a trip across the Atlantic." Whether you are on foot, bicycle, or in a white water raft, as I have done, Harpers Ferry is truly a special place to visit and to learn about.

President George Washington established a federal armory at Harpers Ferry, which was one of only two so established. In 1803, Meriwether Lewis came to Harpers Ferry to outfit the famed Lewis and Clark Expedition for its great journey west. And inventor John Hall developed interchangeable parts technology at his rifle factory in the 1820s and helped transform production from craftsman-based to machine-made armaments. And of course, abolitionist John Brown's attempt at Harpers Ferry in 1859 to ignite and equip a slave revolt edged the nation towards Civil War just two years later.

In 1867, Storer College, which was an integrated school that provided opportunity for higher education for African Americans, was established at Harpers Ferry. In addition, the Second Niagara Movement met in Harpers Ferry in 1906, setting the stage for the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). These are only a few of the stories visitors can learn about at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

In 2002, at the direction of the United States Congress, the National Park Service completed an outreach report to measure community support for the proposed boundary revision. The response was overwhelmingly positive with ninety-four percent of the total responses (3,495), both local and national, in favor of expanding the park. The National Park Service also estimated in 2002 that the cost of acquiring the private lands identified inside the proposed boundary expansion at \$3.7 million. Additionally, the estimated costs of developing small parking areas, restoring battlefields, creating exhibits, and developing trails would be less than \$500,000. And annual additional operational costs for these park additions are estimated at \$150,000. Lastly, it is expected that an expanded boundary for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park could mean an additional 25,000 visitors annually, on top of the current 300,000, attracting \$1.2 million in increased sales benefits to the state of West Virginia.

Specifically, S. 1576 would enlarge the park's boundary from its current 2,505 acres to 3,745 acres, with most of the proposed 1,240-acre expansion area already federally owned. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail own a total of 772 acres. The Civil War Preservation Trust owns 177 acres, which they seek to donate to the park. Six private individuals own 191 acres, all

owners of which do not oppose the proposed boundary expansion. The remaining 100 acres in the proposed expansion is to allow for a safety margin for precise acreages that could change as lands are surveyed and acquired.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Christensen, and other Resource Committee Members of the Subcommittee, I support this legislation strongly and urge its passage as soon as possible. In addition, I would also like to thank the many groups and individuals who have supported this initiative: The Harpers Ferry Conservancy, Friends of Harpers Ferry Nat'l Historical Park, the West Virginia NAACP, The American Travel Center, National Park Trust, National Parks Conservation Association, Nat'l Coalition for History, Annette Gavin, Deborah and Philip Hale, Paul Wilson, Mel and Nina Vigel, Dennis and Anne Small, Kerry Noon, Pam Reiman, Keith Hammersla, Hugh Erskine, David Lillard, and Lee Baihly. Thank you.